

Request for Reconsideration:

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation that the Examiner indicates that claims 2, 4-8, and 15-17 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format, including the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants are amending independent claims 1 and 9 to incorporate the limitations of allowable, dependent claims 5 and 15, respectively. Applicants also are amending claims 2, 6, 7, 10, 12, 16, and 17 to clarify the claimed invention, and are adding new independent claims 19 and 20. Moreover, Applicants are canceling original claims 4, 5, 14, and 15, without prejudice to the subject matter claimed thereby. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the above-captioned patent application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Remarks:

1. Rejections

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 3, 9, 11, and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,295,808 to Machida. The Office Action also rejects claims 9-12, 14, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a), as anticipated by Patent Application Publication Nos. US 2003/0152467 to Higashiyama and US 2003/0053916 to Terauchii. Applicants respectfully traverse.

2. 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 3, 9, 11, and 13 as anticipated by U.S. Machida, and claims 9-12, 14, and 18 as anticipated by Terauchii. Applicants have amended independent claims 1 and 9 to incorporate the limitations of dependent claims 5 and 15. The Office Action indicates that claims 5 and 15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format, including the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the anticipation rejection of independent claims 1 and 9 at least for this reason.

Applicants have canceled claim 14. Therefore, the anticipation rejection of claim 4 is rendered moot.

Claims 3, 11-13, and 18 depend from allowable independent claims 1 and 9, respectively. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner also withdraw the anticipation rejection of claims 3, 11-13, and 18 at least for this reason.

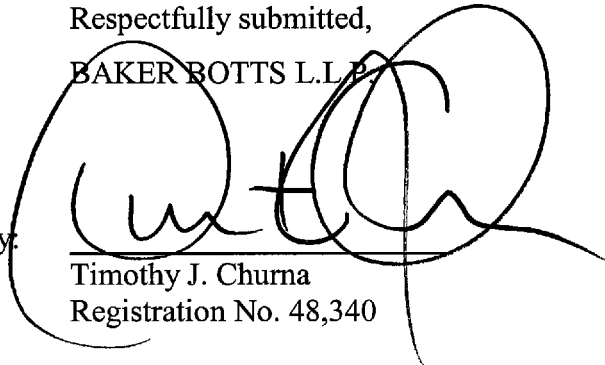
Conclusion:

Applicants respectfully submit that the above-captioned patent application, as amended, is in condition for allowance, and such disposition is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that the prosecution of this application may be furthered by discussing the application, in person or by telephone, with Applicants' representative, we would welcome the opportunity to do so. Applicants respectfully request that the PTO please charge all fees to the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 02-0375.

Respectfully submitted,

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